critical digest

505 FIFTH AVENUE. N. Y. 17. N. Y.
MU 2-0328 T. M. KRAUS

Nov 30, 1953 Vol VI No 13 $10 year $25 3 years The NYC Theatre Newsletter

New York Theatre Diary

Madam Will You Walk- Phoenix 12/1/53. New theatre located at 12th St and 2nd Ave is former movie house. T. Edward Hambleton and Norris Houghton are producing limited run productions at popular prices. Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn head cast of Sidney Howard drama which Playwrights Company tried out on road in 1939 with George M. Cohan. ...Kismit-Ziegfeld -12/3/53. Charles Lederer presents Edwin Lester's production of a new musical based on Edward Knoblock's 1911 play. Score by Alexander Borodin, musical adaption and lyrics by Robert Wright and George Forrest. Book by Lederer and Luther Davis. Starring Alfred Drake, with Doretta Morrow, Richard Kiley and Philip Coolidge. Directed by Albert Marre. Dances staged by Jack Cole.

Eugene O'Neill Dies

America's foremost playwright, Eugene O'Neill, died of pneumonia at age 65 at his Boston Back Bay hotel apartment. He had suffered from Parkinson's Disease for several years. O'Neill's last Broadway production was The Iceman Cometh in 1946. Of the last three plays he wrote only one was produced. A Moon for the Misbegotten had its premiere in Columbus, Ohio, but did not play on Broadway. A second, A Touch of the Poet has not yet been produced. While the third, Long Day's Journey Into Night is not to be produced, by the author's request, until 1978. It is believed that this script concerns his own family life. Also by the playwright's request the date and place of his funeral will not be made public.

Current Theatre Reviews

The Shrike- City Center 11/25/53. Jose Ferrer's production of the 1952 Pulitizer Prize play by Joseph Kramm, the second of four productions starring Ferrer, won another set of unanimous notices. Several were mild in tone, but all agreed that inspite of the hugeness of the house the play and production came off well. Judith Evelyn shared plaudits with Ferrer, who aided Kramm in the staging. Atkinson, Times, listed drama as done with skill by some of our best theatre workmen. He did note that it was wonderful stuff , a sort of Grand Guignol with a college education. Kerr, Herald Tribune, filed mild complaint that a few scenes slow down on the large stage, but admitted this was quibbling items in a vigorious, incisive, compelling performance. Coleman, Mirror, okayed the provocative play for those looking for drama that makes your spine tingle. Current version seemed almost identical with the original, praised McClain, Journal American. Watts, Post, agreed script had lost none of its original interest. While Sheaffer, Eagle, agreed that the second time around it continues as sharp, merciless theatre. But he believes it played better in the smaller Cort.

NYC Newspaper Strike

Six NYC daily newspapers may not publish next week due to a strike of photo-engravers. The result of picket lines would halt other newspaper union men from going to work. "CD" will attempt to give, with the cooperation of critics and press agents, a complete theatre news summary and digests of comments and reviews next week.

Village Theatre

American Gothic production keeps Circle in Square group the top off Broadway outfit operating today, oknys Gros, Variety. Though Victor Wolfson's drama leaves much to be desired, the acting and production are tops.

Off Broadway

Princeton Triangle Club will present Malice in Wonderland Dec 16-19 at Hunter College Playhouse...Heavenly Express will be presented by Equity Library Dec2 -6 with Clifford Carpenter, Jerry Rockwood and Margaret Thompson...Hiram Sherman and Arlene Francis will host Equity Library's "Cocktail Revue" Dec 13 at Piccadilly Hotel.

The Quick Years, Vance Bourjally's play presented by Artists & Writers Theatre at St. Clements Church, proved a useful showcase to the author, noted Calta, Times. But for the playgoer it had an unfortunate tendency to fly off in various directions.

Othello, presented at Jan Hus by Shakespeare Guild Festival, greeted by Jess, Variety as a potent addition to the Off Broadway scene. Acting is first rate.

Vaudeville

Palace now giving late Wed, Thur, Fri shows, plus a midnight show Sat. Current bill features Lew Parker making his first appearance at the Palace. Others include Landon & Midgets, Felo Bergaza and Bruno Tarraza, Cleopatra, Ross Wyse and June Mann, Hammond's birds, Beau Jenkins.

Radio City Music Hall's traditional "Nativity pageant will be presented on Dec 3 with Patricia Raynay, soprano. Also "Christmas, USA" revue will be presented.

Theatre Book Comments

"Curtain Time", Lloyd Morris' story of the American theatre approved by 3 critics. Downing, Variety, billed it as the most acceptable of recent short histories, but pointed out that book skipped many stage unions, showboats, minstrels, burlesque and vaudeville. Coleman, Mirror, listed it as one of the most important theatre books of the year, absorbing and interesting. His sole complaint was that book didn't give enough credit to Joseph Jefferson. Kruthc, Times, okayed book for those who enjoy theatre's somewhat raffish "glamour." But doubted if those who regard drama world with almost religious solemnity will find it very rewarding.

Broadway TV Theatre

Kind Lady, the 1935 Edward Chodorov drama which became a vehicle for Gladys George, will be presented by WOR TV Broadway TV Theatre Nov 30-Dec 4 at 7 30 PM with Sylvia Sidney. Adaption of Hugh Walpole tale played 102 performances at the Booth. Two critics panned proceedings . Brown, Post, rated it minor Crime Club concoction, and Sobel, Mirror, panned it as preposterous, dull. On the pro side Atkinson, Times, rated it a yarn of crafty villainies wonderfully understated. The 1940 revivial produced by Miss George's husband, William Brady, ran 107 performances at the Playhouse. All critics then praised it. Waldorf, Post, noted that all but such an old fault finder as Brown, would enjoy it.

Theatre TV Comments

"Life With Father" CBS TV long awaited series based on Lindsay & Crouse comedy panned by 3 critics as a drab, dull version. Gould, Times, fears the beloved work has been turned into a tawdry, pedestrian Hollywood farce. Van Horne, World Telegram & Sun, labeled it as cheap and [illegible] misrepresentation of the story. Missed the boat, summed up Variety-mugg-

Green Room Department

ROAD PROBLEMS...Two big facts in current road tour business pointed out by Armstrong, variety are that the old high cost methods of touring are out of date and that every attraction which tours with a Hollywood star and no scenery is a hit. Some managers believe shows budgeted at $12,500 per week can make money on the road. Another interesting trend the press agent pointed out is that the no-scenery shows are playing community houses and auditoriums,not theatres.

COLUMN TIPS...US Immigration quietly surveying passport irregularities of several top Broadway stars, whispers Winchell...Press Agents and managers union planning to move into music business on a large scale,reports Walker...John Golden is trying to sign Betty Hutton for a musical version of Seventh Heaven, hears Wilson.

CON PROOFREADERS...Books in theatre field this season are filled with mistakes in proper names, dates and production titles ,details Downing, Variety. One of the tragedies is that most theatre books never get past a first printing. Thus the errors stand , and the next generation of the [illegible] researchers will copy down the mistakes as facts. Suggested solution by variety mugg is for publishers to set up a central bureau of show-world information to which manuscripts could be submitted for proper checking.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...When reviewers praise Off Broadway work, warns Watts,Post, they should be careful not give the performers false hopes...Pretty young girls thinking of coming to NY to be show girls were advised by Mortimer,Mirror, to stay home because there aren't many jobs...Every section of the country except Broadway, chides Coleman,Mirror, is presenting the classics.

MCCARTHY OFF BROADWAY...Foley Square Federal Court appearance of McCarthy troupe playing "Mystery at Monmouth" was panned by Watts,Post, for dull presentation, lack of originality, and poor performances by adequate actors.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES...There now seems to be a great appetite for the theatre on the part of the public, Can-Can co-producer Ernest Martin told Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun producer. This business about the theatre being an invalid shocks him. Personally he finds it a heavenly business. To prove that the theatre is important the producer pointed to the large amount of space the newspapers devote to it daily.

Pros & Cons by TMK

"Fine performances in dull play" is a trite critical cliche that has been used over and over this season. Actually there is no reason why every performance on Broadway should not be perfect. With 6000 Equity members to chose from, the casting director can hardly miss. The pity of current seasons is that there are not 6000 professional playwrights to choose scripts from. Perhaps more constructive views on scripts,and less raves for professionals, might push up the number.

CD Coupon

THEATRE NEWSLETTER--weekly digests NYC theatre news,reviews,comments. Ticket, critics reports. Drama books, records. Year round features. Ideal gift for "stage-struck" fans,students,etc. $10 per year. $12.50 foreign. $25 for 3 years includes free Merman-Martin LP disc. Compiled by "Broadway in Brief" columnist.

Name.....

Address.....

Guy Lombardo will produce the outdoor musical spectacle for the next two summers at the 8200 seat Jones Beach Marine Stadium, 25 m[illegible] from NYC. Since Mike Todd, who produced A Night in Venice for the past two summ[illegible]nced he was quitting the theatre to devote his full time to the films, it has been a guessing contest who would win the monster assignment. Billy Rose and Rodgers and Hammerstein were a few of the names mentioned. For [illegible] orchestra leade[illegible] has appeared with his Royal Canadians Orchestra at NY's Hotel Roosevelt [illegible] past 24 years, this will be his first theatre production and he plans to produc[illegible] spectacle based on "Sinbad the Sailor" and other Arabian Nights stories. A cast of 250 including 3 top stars, a singer, a dancer, and an actor, will be featured.

Plays

7 closings Nov 28 included--Gently Does It, Escapade, Guys & Dolls, Ladies of Corridor, Porgy & Bess, Take A Giant Step, and Wish You Were Here...The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker is the new name of "The Family Man" script which will star Burgess Meredith.

People

ANTA's new executive director Willard Swire will seek to develop plans for a national theatre...Edna Best will star in Mademoiselle Columbe, as first announced... Eddie Albert will take over Tom Ewell's role in 7 Year Itch. Paul Douglas who was scheduled to sub while Ewell rests became ill...Rosalind Russell appeared in Bonwit Teller's window Monday midnight to open a display featuring a windowful of mannequins that looked just like the Wonderful Town star... Dick Haymes has been expelled from Actors Equity for putting false information on his application blank.

Other Broadways

Avon in Birmingham, Alabama, is nation's newest legit theatre. The movie house presented Barter Theatre productions of Ah Wilderness and [illegible] and Margaret... Bikini bathing suits worn by gals of Wish You Were Here in Chicago...Maurice Schwartz has closed his Los Angeles English language theatre due to lack of business...Paul Green's next North Carolina outdoor pageant will be at Bethania, a small Morovain settlement near Winston Salem.

Theatre Book Notes

A biography of Olsen & Johnson is being prepared by zany comics press agent, Stanley Seiden..."Teen Theatre" by Edwin and Nathalie Ross, published by Whittlesey House..."The Caine Mutiny Court Martial" text to be published by Doubleday.

TUNE IN WNBC(NYC) BEN GRAUER 7 30 AM. "CD" prepares brief summaries reviews newshows.

CRITICAL DIGEST
505-Fifth Ave, NYC

First Class Mail